

Follower
Servant
Husband
Father



Two weeks ago, we asked the question that arises out of Revelation 7:3 - what is the seal placed on the foreheads of the servants of God?

Last week we grappled with the question that arises out of Revelation 7:14 - **what is the great tribulation?**

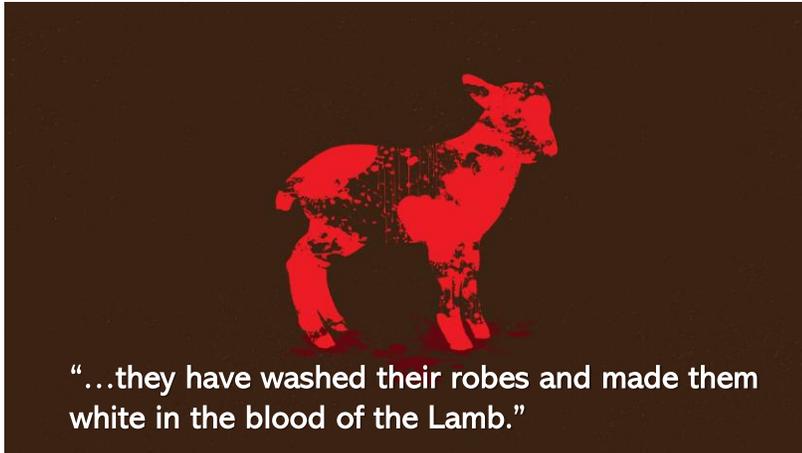
Today we will ask the third question arising out of Revelation 7:15-19 - what is life like in the visible presence of God?

The description made in verses 15-17 – of what life is like in the presence of God – cannot be separated from verse 14.



How can these ones stand before the brilliance of God's person... when at the end of Revelation 6 the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, called out to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb?

There is but one thing that distinguishes these two groups.
Look again at v.14....



What does that mean?

By grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone... the sins of those standing before God have been removed as far as the east is from the west... and the righteousness of Jesus had been freely credited to them.

This is why they can come near to God, why they can live in his presence and why he interacts with them as he does.

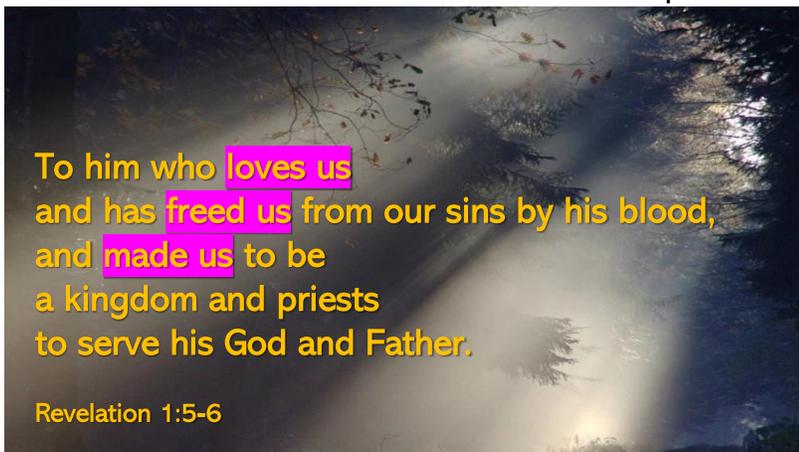
As the redeemed stand in the visible presence of God what is it that they do?

Look again at v.15 – they serve the Lord... day and night in his temple.

What they are doing before the throne... is not something new.

Do you know how we know that?

Because of what was written in the first chapter of Revelation.



Walk with me through these two verses.

- Jesus loves us.
- By the sacrifice of his life, Jesus frees us from our sins.
- Having freed us from our sin Jesus makes us to be something – he makes us to be a kingdom and priests.

- For what purpose?
- To serve his God and Father.

From the moment of our salvation, from the moment of being born of the Spirit, a follower of Jesus is being made to be... a servant of God.

In actuality God is remaking us to be who he created humanity to be in the beginning.

Let's come back to those whom John saw in v.15.

Those before the throne of God, were serving God in his visible presence... just as they had served him here on the earth.

This is important.

**Our identity as followers of Jesus
doesn't change when we die.
Fundamentally, we are and always
will be servants of God.**

Do you remember the parable of the talents?

Matthew 25:14-30



A man entrusted his wealth to his servants.
To one he gave five talents.
To another he gave two.
And to a third he gave one.

You need to know that a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wage.
Let's put that in terms we can understand.

$$\$15 \times 40 \times 52 \times 20 = \$624,000$$

5 talents = **\$3,120,000**

2 talents = **\$1,248,000**

1 talents = **\$ 624,000**

The master entrusted to his servants a vast sum of wealth.

Upon the master's return, his servants gave an accounting of what they had done with what he had given them.

The one who had been entrusted with five had gained five more.

It was the same with the servant who had been entrusted with two.

To both of these servants the master said:

**“Well done, good and faithful servant.
You have been faithful with a few things;
I will put you in charge of many things.
Come and share your master’s happiness.”**

I remember vividly a conversation I had with Pastor Diego in Medellin, Colombia.

**“Well done, good and faithful servant.
You have been faithful with a few things;
I will put you in charge of many things.
Come and share your master’s happiness.”**



He had been studying this particular parable and thinking upon it and had come to realize that in the time of the new heaven and the new earth; the scope of what each of us will be entrusted with... is being decided by our faithfulness now: here again the words of the master - “You have been faithful with... a few things. I will put you in charge of... many things.”

What was the point being made by Jesus?

What is it that God entrusts to his followers in this present time?



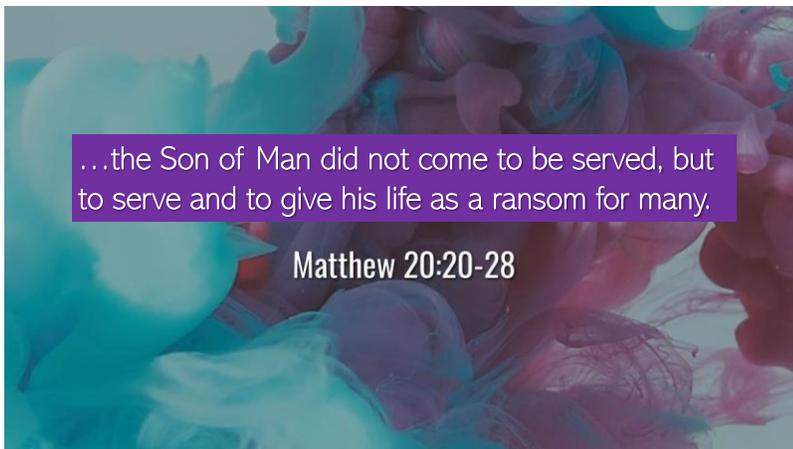
Giftings of grace... to which you cannot put a price.
Giftings which are entrusted to us... not to be hoarded, but to be used...faithfully.

It's here we need to make an important distinction.

The town of Sooke has a vibrant volunteer culture – many people give of their time and energy for the benefit and good of others.

One could make a compelling argument that the church is a community of volunteers.

While volunteer is a great word, it doesn't fully capture who the followers of Jesus have become... and are becoming... nor does it capture the grace of God that has been entrusted to us, nor the reason for which we freely give of this grace to others.



The nature of Jesus is that of a servant – see also Philippians 2:7.

He would have his followers imitate him.

In fact, as we have already seen, this is who he is making us to be... servants, like him... who sacrificially express his grace into and upon the lives of others.

In this regard, what the church is able to accomplish here on the earth, is far beyond the natural abilities of the individuals who make up the church.... for it is the grace of God that works in us and through us and out of us... it is the grace of God which does immeasurably more than we could ever hope or imagine.

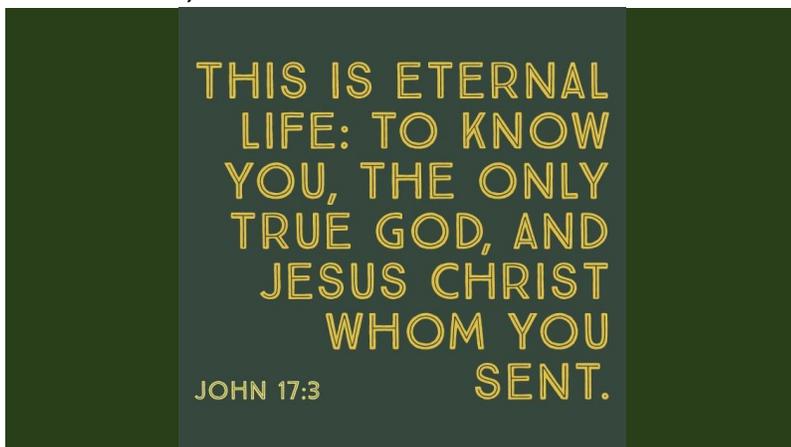
What you and I learn to do here on the earth, as servants, is what we will continue to do in the home of God, if we pass from this life to the next before the return of Jesus... It is also what we will do forever in the time of the new heaven and the new earth.

Of course, it will be different to serve God in his visible presence, but not really...it will be a carry on of our lives here, only far, far, far better and richer and fuller.

After verse 15 tells us where the redeemed are and what they do, the remainder of verses 15-17 describe who God is to those who have appropriated the life blood of Jesus and what is that God does for them.

What we are going to see is that who God is in the life that follows death... is who God has been throughout one's life here on the earth. God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Jesus promised his followers that the life he came to give is life everlasting. In John 17:3, Jesus even described what eternal life is...

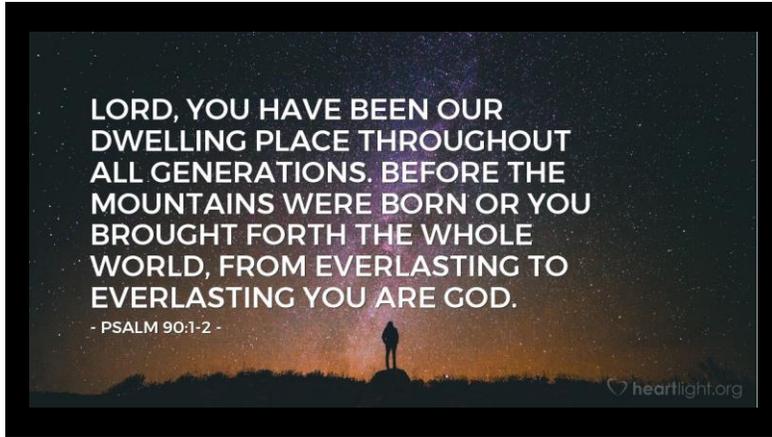


Eternal life is knowing God.
Jesus was not talking about knowing facts about God.
He was talking about knowing God relationally.

Look at the last phrase of v.15 –

he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

Do you remember Psalm 90:1?

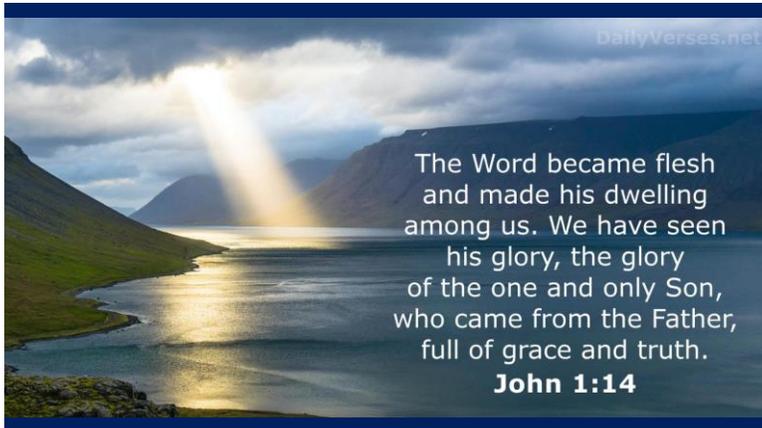


This description of God being “our dwelling place,” echoes back to the nation of Israel’s experience of God after they were liberated from their slavery to Egypt.

God spread his tent over his people.

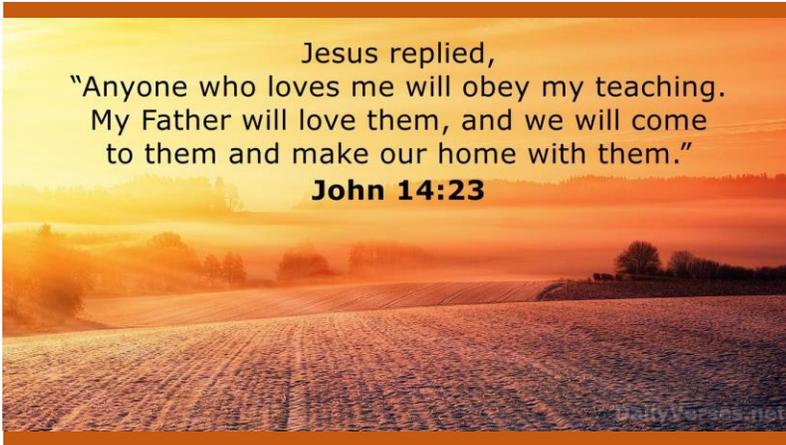
He lived among them as their Protector, their Provider, their Guide.

This is who Jesus revealed God to be when he came into the earth.



He lived among us.

And the purpose of him doing so was that ultimately, John 14:23...



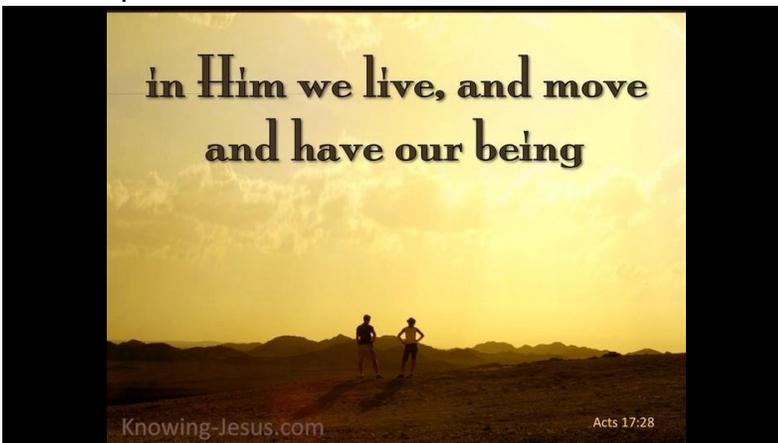
Jesus replied,
"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.
My Father will love them, and we will come
to them and make our home with them."

John 14:23

...he would make his home in us.

Who God is to his people... now... is who God will always be to his people.
He is the God who tabernacles with us; whose presence shelters us.

As Paul preached to the Athenians...



in Him we live, and move
and have our being

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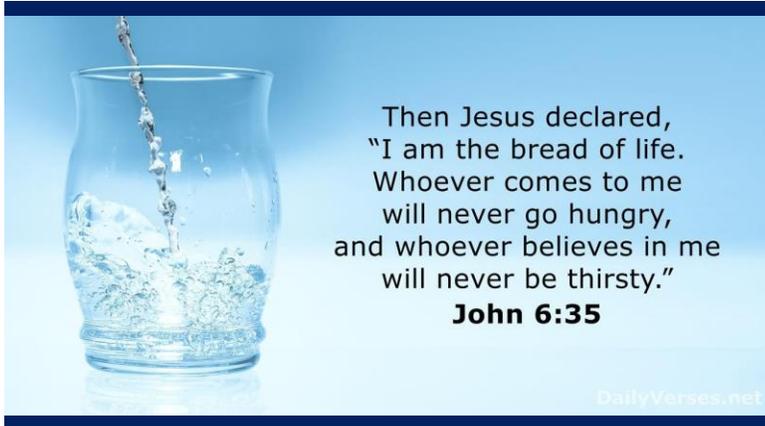
Acts 17:28

Look again at v.16.

The One who lives among us and is with us, and who shelters us...satisfies our hunger and our thirst.

This was the testimony of the nation of Israel during the forty years they journeyed in the desert – God provided for them – food, water, rest, shelter.

When Jesus lived on the earth, do you remember what he stated in John 6:35?



Then Jesus declared,
"I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me
will never go hungry,
and whoever believes in me
will never be thirsty."

John 6:35

DailyVerses.net

Jesus alone is able to satisfy the longings of the soul – its hunger and its thirst. He does so while we live here on the earth. Was that not his promise in Matthew 6:33?



But seek first the
kingdom of God and
his righteousness, and
all these things will be
added to you.

– Matthew 6:33 ESV

And Jesus will continue to do so for all eternity. In him we are satisfied. Listen to what Asaph wrote in Psalm 73:25-26:

Psalm 73:25-26:

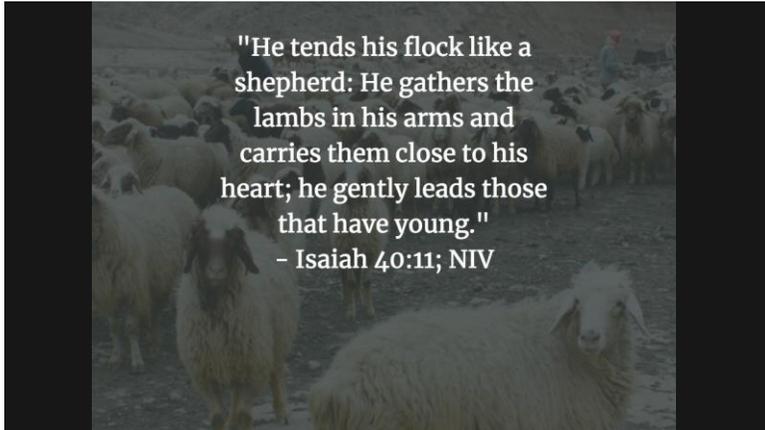
Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you...
God is... my portion forever.

Look again at v.17.

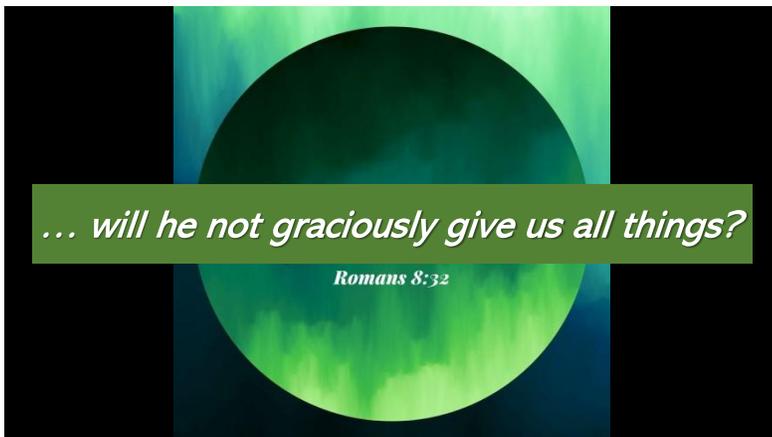
"The Lamb will be their shepherd."

Not that our Lord Jesus already isn't.
But that for all eternity... this is who Jesus will be to his followers.
He will always be our Shepherd.

Do you hear the echo of Psalm 23 – the Lord is my shepherd.
As a shepherd is compassionate to his sheep so is the Lord to his people.

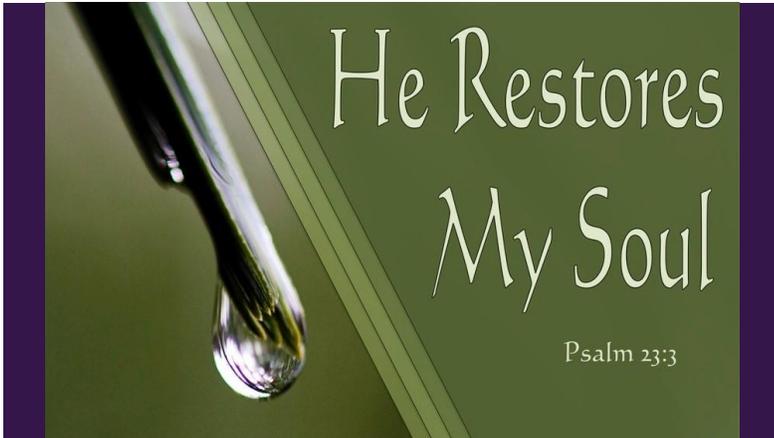


As our Shepherd... Jesus laid down his life for us.
Having done this... having made that ultimate sacrifice... Romans 8:32 makes a stunning
assertion –



The answer to this question is... yes... of course he will, for that is who he is... our
Shepherd.

And what does the Lamb who is our Shepherd do for his own?
Look again at v.17 – he will lead them to “springs of living water.”
For what purpose?
I believe the answer is given in Psalm 23:3.

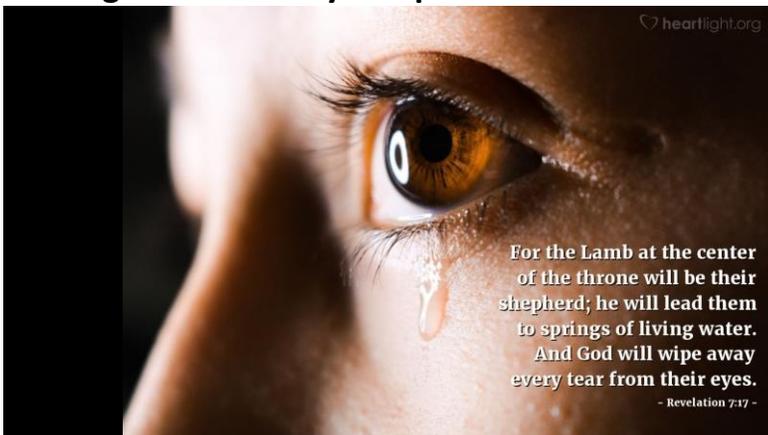


The Shepherd is at work restoring our souls right now. In this present time... he brings out into the light things that we've tucked away in the recesses of our soul –in order to mend, to strengthen, to rebuild... and he does so at a sustainable pace, always dealing with our restoration at his perfect time.

What our Shepherd is doing now, will be ultimately completed when his people live with him in his visible presence.

When he make all things new, the “all things” will include our souls.

Look again at the very last phrase of v.17.



There is great intimacy in this word picture.

This is who God is.

It is not who God will be.

It is who he is ... now... and forever.

Can you envision his eyes?

For they too are as tender as his hand.

This is who our hope is in.

This picture of what life will be like in the visible presence of God... is what inspires us to continue “running the race,” “fighting the good fight,” “standing our ground.”

We do not hope in vain.
Our faith will become sight.

In CS Lewis’ book, *The Last Battle*, in chapter fifteen, as the children and the creatures with them entered into the real Narnia, the Unicorn said:

**“I have come home at last!
This is my real country!
I belong here.**

**This is the land
I have been looking for all my life,
though I never knew it till now.**

**The reason why we loved the old Narnia
is that it sometimes
looked a little like this.”**

As wonderful as it is to have God make his home in us....
to see him face to face... will be the moment of all moments... for then and evermore we
will be home.